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PROCEEDINGS
OF
THE ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY
OF LONDON.

SESSION 1857-8.

Third Meeting, Dec. 14th, 1857.

SIR RODERICK I. MURCHISON, PRESIDENT, in the Chair.

ELECTIONS.—*The Earl of Carnarvon ; Lieut. J. C. Cowell, R.E. ; Lieut.-Col. H. James, Superintendent of the Ordnance Survey ; J. B. Johnston ; F. P. Keyse ; Alderman W. A. Rose ; H. Donald Spence ; and Lieut.-Col. Andrew Scott Waugh, Surveyor-General and Superintendent of the great Trigonometrical Survey of India, were elected Fellows.*

PRESENTATIONS.—*The Marquis of Breadalbane, Mr. Edwin Williams, and Mr. G. B. C. Levenson were presented upon their election.*

DONATIONS.—The following were among the donations to the Library since the previous meeting :—Raper's Navigation, sixth edition ; Superintendent Bache's Report of the United States' Coast Survey ; Statistical Report of the United States Army, by the Surgeon-General ; Report of Major Emory on the United States and Mexican Boundary Survey ; United States Naval and Astronomical Expedition under Lieutenant Gilliss ; Charts and Sailing Directions, published by the Dépôt de la Marine of France ; Atkinson's ' Oriental and Western Siberia ; ' La France Illustrée—Géographie, Histoire, &c., par V. A. Malte-Brun ; Transactions of the Franklin Institute of Pennsylvania, of the Academy of Sciences of Madrid, of the Smithsonian Institution of Washington, of the Historical Society of Wisconsin, of the American Academy of Sciences, of the Boston Society of Natural History, of St. Louis Academy of Sciences, of the American Antiquarian, Geographical, and Philosophical Societies, and of the Zoological and Statistical Societies of London, &c.

In calling attention to the numerous presentations received since the last meeting, the President specially referred to Mr. Atkinson's work on his ' Explorations in Oriental and Western Siberia and Chinese Tartary.' The work,

he added, did the highest honour to the individual who accomplished such laborious and hazardous journeys, and had made us familiar, through his artistic skill, with vast mountainous regions of the earth which had been trodden by few civilised men. He strongly commended this work to the favourable consideration of the Fellows.

ANNOUNCEMENTS.—The Chairman announced that, respecting the reported discovery of a large fresh-water lake in South Australia by Mr. Goyder, an account of which had been read at a previous meeting, Captain Freeling, the Surveyor-General, had just returned from the exploration of the so-called grassy, well-watered district, which he found to be almost entirely imaginary, and that the flood waters had disappeared. Lake Torrens was again a shoal salt lake, with immense borders of mud. After the most persevering efforts it was found impossible to launch the boat taken up by Captain Freeling. The country near the lake was also found to be of the most desolate character, exactly as our geographers Eyre, Sturt, and Frome had described it.

The papers read were :—

1. *The Exploration of Arid Countries.* By FRANCIS GALTON, Esq., M.A.,
Honorary Secretary.

THERE is no comparison between the difficulty of first exploring a desert land and that of travelling across it when its oases have been discovered. Besides the difficulties of a new road and the necessity of travelling during the heat of daylight, all first explorers labour under a peculiar and overwhelming difficulty in having the fear of a double journey perpetually before their eyes. They can never venture so far from camp as to preclude the possibility of being able to return to it without a fresh supply of water, and the extreme limit of their excursions, into the heart of the desert, is reduced to one-half of that which they (or other travellers after them) could have accomplished, if they had been assured of a watering place at the close of their journey. Again, as the *radius* of their excursions is only one-half of the length available, it follows that the *area* of their explorations may be only one-fourth as much, and, therefore, that their chance of finding an oasis, useful to others, is in that proportion less than what it would be if they became possessed of means of travelling farther. And, finally, even this limited field of exploration can only be attempted by persons who are able to endure great personal hardship, and who do not shrink from the certainty of exhausting their cattle, and the great risk of killing some of them, in each fruitless expedition. Exceptional cases doubtless occur; indeed, if it were not for these, the longer